HENRY MILLER AND "THE GREAT DIVIDE."

Henry Miller is one of the few American actors who is artistic, well-bred, and intellectual without posing as a scholar. Perhaps were the truth known he spends as much time in his library as do certain professionals who enjoy the reputation of students, and so impress by a superior air which carries with it the conviction that mind rules matter. Prof. Willis Moore, whom we all recognize as the undisputed weather expert of this country, informed me last summer that there is no such thing as matter; that both animate and inanimate objects spring from a mere molecule, and, in the last spark of existence, are again reduced to the original speck. It would be well were Prof. Moore to speak thus to some knowing members of stageland. The nothingness of all life might in some little help adjust the immensity of the present.

Mr. Miller has for some years possessed the distinction of offering the public plays which appealed in other ways rather than to one's trivial interest. Since joining the class of actor-managers he has endeavored still more urgently to present dramas which, without apparent effort, would lift the stage from the slough into which it has fallen. In Margaret Anglin he has an associate who is the essence of womanliness and refinement. Surely there could be no better professional conjunction than that of these two popular artists. Miss Anglin's ideals are of the highest, and she will follow such tenets of faith, though the whole world be against her, for she is a young woman with much strength of character and a determination which once aroused crushes by sheer force. Miss Anglin's superior education and social training have had much influence upon her views of plays and the stage, and the touch of the cultured woman is apparent in her every venture. Although only twenty-seven years of age she has made remarkable progress in her career, and Mr. Miller is extremely fortunate in having the co-operation of a woman of such discrimination. Surely Mme. Sarah Bernhardt did not err in her judgment when she openly declared Miss Anglin a wonderfully talented and distinguished young actress who has the emotional field in America at her feet.

With two chief exponents of the best in native art it was then to be expected that any play in which they jointly appeared would be worthy of their talents. In "The Great Divide" Mr. Miller and Miss Anglin have furnished the dramatic surprise of the season. Not in many years has a play by a native writer caused such interest, such comment, as does this drama. Washington applauded "The Great Divide," and those who have had the pleasure of seeing both Mr. Miller and Miss Anglin in their previous appearances are unanimous in declaring that they offer the most finished interpretations of their careers.

"The Great Divide," like Lochinvar, came out of the West, and like the dashing gallant it came forth boldly prepared to triumph. New York has surrendered completely to the power of its fascination, and at the conclusion of the great second act of the opening night at the Princess Theater the most exacting critics were unstinted in their praise. Up to the present time "The Great Divide" is the biggest success of the theatrical season. The play is original in its theme, which is handled in a novel manner. It is a masterly study of two characters, and is the New World offspring of the Old World masters—Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and their European disciples. The subject is daring in the extreme, but it is handled with utmost delicacy of feeling and exquisite beauty of thought and expression. The jargon mouthed by the average actor of the usual play of the day wrinkles and shrivels before one's very eyes when the calcium of Prof. Moody's well-turned phrases fall upon it. Not since "Therese Raquin" has there been so exhaustive a study of a man and woman in the details of love and passion. "The Great Divide" does not possess the horror of the former play, for it does not offer the murder of a body in the reaching of love for love. Instead, Stephen attempts the annihilation of a soul.

Naturally, Mr. Miller and Miss Anglin are intensely interested in so marvelous and absorbing a study. Both are very happy over their success in this city. Certainly no finer acting has been seen here. The critics declare the acting of each to be above criticism.

"It is a wonderfully inspiring feeling, that of success," remarked Mr. Miller, at the conclusion of one of the performances of "The Great Divide." "How delightful it is to realize that your efforts are meeting with the approval of those for whom you play. Both Miss Anglin and myself felt absolutely confident of the New York verdict of "The Great Divide," because of the interest manifested by your audiences in Washington, which are extremely critical and rather difficult to arouse. However, we were quite prepared to put on another play at once in case of a New York failure, for, after all, it is New York which influences the country at large. Praise from the metropolis will not make a play a success elsewhere, but it will cause many persons to attend a performance which otherwise would escape their observation, and vice versa. It is a mistake for an actor to say that he does not care about criticism. He values it highly, provided it is honest. Frank expression of opinion by a scholarly mind must always find an appreciative reader. I personally read carefully what is said of my work, and very often profit by the originality of the other man, provided he be a man at least my equal in experience and intellect. It is only the outpourings of an inferior brain that actors of good balance should disdain."

Mr. Miller's manner of speaking needs no further proof of his good breeding and well-trained mind. His tone is quiet, but convincing. At rehearsals he is entirely different. He understands what he needs, and gets it without delay, for he is a strict disciplinarian, but he is not more so with others than with himself.

In speaking of the play, he said: "I had never heard of 'The Great Divide' until Miss Anglin, who was in Chicago, telegraphed me for permission to give it a trial. She was unusually impressed by it, and since I possess implicit faith in her judgment, I wired her to do what she liked. The drama created a sensation in Chicago, where it was produced under the title of 'The Sabine Woman.' I provoked a torrent of discussion, and convinced Miss Anglin that she had secured the dramatic find of the year. Miss Anglin is very stanch in her opinions, and if she believes in a play, will do everything in her power to make others share her belief. She has worked long and faithfully since last spring to perfect the details of her interpretation. I, also, have given my undivided attention to the character of Stephen. There was, of course, the element of brutality which had to be carefully acted, else it might offend. Had we intended a sensational production it would have been easy enough with the material provided in the first act, but neither Miss Anglin nor myself is seeking that type of success.

"'The Great Divide' is called a Western play, and so it is, in that the costumes and scenery are Western, but the story might take place anywhere. After all, there is very little to atmosphere. It is the drama itself which counts. There is atmosphere wherever there is sky. Some few of our friends were dubious about the play, giving as a reason the fact that it is the last of a number of Western offerings.

"'The Great Divide' might be of any land. The play differs from its contemporaries, and undeniably shows the influence of the modern impressionistic school. It may possibly open a new groove for the American dramatist, in enabling him to exert his breadth of language and situation. It is so easy to follow others, and managers too frequently reject that which departs from the beaten path because of a certain timidity in what they term 'forcing the public taste.' That is the explanation of so much similarity in the modern drama. Managers argue that plays come in cycles; that a romantic drama which meets with an enthusiastic welcome must needs be followed by others which will be as warmly received. It is the manager who forces the public taste, while scorning to do so."

"In my opinion 'The Great Divide' is the first of its kind to illustrate the power of Ibsen and his followers in America. We have not been so quick to show this power, but this has perhaps been occasioned by the search for European plays, leaving the native products still on the market. It seems to me that Prof. Moody acknowledges the foundation of 'The Great Divide' and then proceeds to erect a building to suit his own fancy. He offers a problem, characters, the psychological moment, and all that with beautiful elaboration, and yet after the last curtain one feels certain that the play is Moody, and not a mere imitation. There can be but one great master who sets the precedent, such as Shakespeare or Ibsen, and it is so much more sensible to realize this."

"You are an ardent student of Ibsen, I presume?" I said, by way of hearing his views concerning the great Norwegian.

"I read him, certainly," answered Mr. Miller, "but I must confess that I am not an Ibsenite. I think that he has achieved remarkable results in his influence on the construction of modern plays, and that has been for the good of the writers, but I concede little more."

That Mr. Miller has retained his popularity as a matinee idol was apparent at the matinees of the new play, where standing room only was to be secured. A glance at the rows and rows of girlish faces assured me that the old charm was still potent, and that the hero of the romantic drama, the society play, the historical drama, and other sieces was again exerting his fascination as the rough-and-ready Stephen of the realistic drama.

MARIE B. SCHRADER.

New York, Oct. 12.

NOTES FROM STAGELAND.

Lillian Russell's friends may find consolation in the taought that fleshy people stand frost well.

Ben Teal has committed matrimony again. Margaret Busby is the party of the second part.

During the Sothern-Marlowe engagement in Baltimore, Sudermann's "John the Baptist" will probably be presented in a church, no theater being available.

George M. Cohan is going to present a life of Washington as a souvenir at the matinees of his new colonial play.

Maude Adams, in "Peter Pan," is said to have broken the record on receipts during a recent three-performance engagement at Rochester, N. Y.

As a result of careful tinkering, Wilton Lackaye's "The Law and the Man" is now said to be catching on wonderfully in the West.

"Sir Anthony" is the title of a new play Haddon Chambers has written for the Lieblers. When or where it will be produced has not been decided.

Bertha Kalisch is rapidly recovering from an operation for appendicitis, which temporarily interfered with her season in "The Kreutzer Sonata."

Yvette Guilbert wears a tragic air these days, both on and off the stage. She has lost her dog, Scripcon. Besides, she has been sued for $1,200 by a French dressmaker.

Half a dozen "music pirates" were sentenced in one day, recently, by a London magistrate.

A seminary for the higher education of chorus girls has been opened in Chicago.

Mrs. Fiske, in "The New York Idea," was flatteringly received by the Milwaukee critics last week.

James K. Hackett's private car was robbed of several hundred dollars' worth of diamonds and things at New Haven the other day.

Mr. Richard Mansfield, in an extensive repertoire of his best plays, together with two new productions, is one of the dramatic treats in store for patrons of the National.

Next Tuesday evening the Belasco Theater will entertain the attaches of the Dupont Powder Company, of Wilmington, Del., at the performance of Mr. Louis Mann and Miss Clara Lipman in "Julie Bonbon," Col. J. G. Ewing, of this city, having purchased a number of boxes and the greater part of the orchestra seats for this occasion.

MUSICAL NOTES.

According to anti-season announcements, New York will soon hear the Wilde-Strauss opera of "Salome," which is the talk of the principal European cities. It is claimed that this version of Oscar Wilde's "Salome," which Richard Strauss has made into an opera, bids fair to rank with the greatest musical productions of all times.

* * *

A recent writer in Musical America, who is in agreement with others on the subject of denying that the negro melodies are purely African, declares that they are derived largely from Scotch airs. For generations, he asserts, the negro, while under the ban of slavery and in contact with the enlightened white race, did not fail to change in nature, so much so that in lifa, language, and song he eventually became American. In certain parts of the Southern States the early settlers were largely of Scotch descent. It is natural, therefore, that the negro should take kindly to the Scotch music, both major and minor. It is also natural that through a process of evolution these Scotch melodies should in time become negro.

* * *

Mr. Harry Wheaton Howard, organist and choir director of Immaculate Conception Church, has just completed a new mass in D, which will be sung early in December by the newly organized boy choir of that church. This mass is written strictly in accordance with the rubrics of the Catholic Church, in that it does not repeat a word of the text; yet the music is modern in character, and those who hear it, and those whose ears have been accustomed to figured masses, will find that the change from the old style to the new is less radical than they feared. A choir of picked singers has been selected from the Immaculate Conception Parish School, and extra rehearsals are being held to bring their work to a state of proficiency. Besides this mass, Mr. Howard has written several new songs and a Christmas anthem, which will probably be heard this winter. Two prominent singers have offered to give recitals composed wholly of Mr. Howard's songs. Arrangements for these recitals will be made later.

AN UNCLE TOMMER'S DIARY.

Oct. 9.—This is Skidville. We opened here last night and are to play again to-night and also Wednesday night. The show is a hit, and all because of me. There was a good-sized congregation present when the services opened. I state it that way because it was the soberest, saddest audience I ever saw anywhere. It sat out there in the hall and regarded us with suspicion. Before I came on with the donkey half the audience had slipped out softly, making as much noise as a packing box rolling downstairs when they went down the steps themselves.

I was a little nervous when I started out with the donkey. But the nervousness wore off very quickly. Also almost all of my costume and considerable of my make-up.

It was all the fault of the manager. The donkey started as slowly and solemnly as an ice wagon, and the manager threw something at him from the wings.

The donkey suddenly wished to stand on his head.

I urged him not to. I pulled back on the bridle and dug my heels into his side, but to no avail.

Finally we compromised. I stood on my head.

And then the donkey came across the stage, as soon as I had assumed a sitting posture, and began eating my trouser legs.

The more I wriggled and twisted and tried to get away, the more he bit off, at times heedlessly taking a chew of my skin.

By this time the audience was sitting straight up and yelling with delight and admiration. The people that had gone out heard the cheers and came rushing back, increasing the racket and adding to the excitement of the donkey.

Every time I tried to run off the stage the manager or some of the company would be in the wings and push me back. Simon Legeree threatened me with his whip several times.

But at last I made a flying leap, knocking the manager down, and escaped to the dressing-room. There I stood, counting my bruises, when from outside I heard a tumult like to the sound of twenty thunderstorms all working at once.

The manager came running and called me:

"Go on!" he said, "Go on! Man, you've made the hit of your life. Get back there and give them an encore!"

"Not much," I replied, pinning up a chewed place in my coat.

"Go on! Have you no regard for your art?"

"I have; but I have a little regard for my skin, too."

"My heavens, man! What do a few inches of skin amount to compared with a success?"

But I wasn't going out there again. I was beginning to ache all over by this time, and I had found a bump on my head that I had overlooked.

"Come, now," begged the manager, while the hand-clapping and stamping of feet and yelling grew tremendous. "Come, now, if you won't respond to an encore go on the stage and bow your appreciation of the applause. There is no necessity of insulting an audience, is there?"

"Where's the donkey?" I asked.

"The donkey will be held, all right. Go on and take your stage call."

I shouldn't have done it. I should have stuck to my decision. But when he said "Take your stage call," I remembered all the actors I had ever seen, and how magnificent and stately they appeared when they would advance to the center of the stage and bow repeatedly while the audience shouted and cheered.

It was too much of a temptation. I drew my tattered coat about my throat with my left hand, crooked my right arm behind me and stalked calmly onto the stage. The audience redoubled its yelling.

I bowed to the right, I bowed to the left, I bowed to the front, and still they cheered. I stepped forward to the footlights and bowed again.

The audience cheered and clapped hands and I bowed right along until the noise subdued somewhat. Then I cleared my throat and raised my hand to command silence, just as Bryan does from the rear platform.

At once a deathlike hush fell over the assemblage. I never heard silence come so quick. Even the smiles faded from the faces of those before me, and into their eyes crept a tense expectancy. I began:

"Ladies and gentlemen: I am proud to—"

And then the donkey kicked me clear from the stage into the bass drum;

While the manager was helping me separate myself from the drum in my dressinm-room I heard more cheers in front.

"I won't go out there again, no odds how much they cheer," I said.

"You needn't. They're encoring the donkey now," he told me.

WILBUR D. NESBIT.

(Copyright, 1906, by W. D. Nesbit.)

NEGROES AS FARM LABORERS.

Difficulty Said to Be Experienced in Getting Them to Work.

E. S. Senter in Houston Post.

Eight years ago the writer, in a discussion of the labor problems of the Texas farmer submitted to the farmers' congress in session at the Agricultural and Mechanical College, asserted that experience had proved that the negro would work efficiently and steadily only when under some degree of compulsion, and declared that the time would soon be reached when Texas would be forced to import white labor for its cotton farms or devise a plan to compel its negroes to work for a living. Reports which are coming up from all parts of the State indicate that we have reached that point earlier than the writer expected.

Two weeks ago a group of negro men was circled about a farmer on the square at Dallas. He was pleading with them to go out with him to pick cotton. All of them were idle. Most of them were subsisting on the earnings of negro women, some of whom are "washladies," according to the new vocabulary, and some other kind of "ladies." Out of the assemblage the farmer secured about two cotton pickers, and the probabilities are that one of those quit him on the first pay day. This is a typical incident. All over Texas farmers are pleading—almost upon bended knees—for negroes to work in the cotton patch, at prices which enable the pickers to earn from $2.50 to $4 per day. Yet the efficient force in the cotton patch to-day is less than 25 per cent of the idle negro population which ought to be available for the service. In other words, three-fourths of the negro population of Texas has decided and determined to live without work. That is not an exaggeration. It is an understatement of the case.

The question is what are the people of Texas going to do about it? Are the white people of Texas willing to assume the burden of the maintenance and so-called education of some 500,000 or more negroes who imagine that the world owes them a living and have, up to date, pursued very effective methods of collecting the debt?

One plan that might be adopted would be to require, by adequate laws, every able-bodied man to earn a living or show sufficient income to support him. Such provision should not discriminate between races. A white vagabond can offer no more excuse for his worthlessness than a negro vagabond. Both ought to be put to work. If they will not work voluntarily, both should go to the city rock pile or the county road.

This question is so inseparably connected with the educational problem that one necessarily suggests the other. Education which trains people—either whites or blacks—to love and choose idleness is a curse, not a blessing. In Texas and throughout the South we are educating nearly all the blacks and a considerable number of the whites to hate manual labor.

WEATHER BUREAU WISDOM.

Defense of That Institution Based On an Aeronaut's Victory.

From the Pittsburg Dispatch.

Notwithstanding an official campaign of education and Prof. Willis Moore's assertion that the Weather Bureau falls down on only about 17 per cent of its predictions, the popular idea that forecasting the weather is more or less a matter of guesswork and telegraphic advices is hard to dispel. It is therefore an imperative duty when the bureau accomplishes something by sheer force of scientific knowledge to blazon the fact on the outer walls in order that this erroneous and unjust impression may be dissipated.

What better demonstration of the applied science used by the Weather Bureau could there be than that afforded by the victory of the American balloon in that race of aeronauts at Paris? True, it was commanded by an Ohio man, Capt. F. P. Lahm, of the Sixth Cavalry, and the city of Canton, but not even the genius of Ohio for getting ahead can wholly account for his defeat of all rivals. Had it not been for Maj. Hersey, formerly of the Weather Bureau, the result might have been different. As it was, the major, before ascending, hitched his trousers fore and aft sailor fashion and scanned the sky for squalls. His scientific training in the Weather Bureau told him that the heavier and faster air currents would be found in the lower strata, and that their revolutions from left to right would carry the balloon to England. While the competing and unscientific foreigners were soaring in the upper strata searching for desirable winds, Capt. Lahm, following the major's Weather-Bureauwise instructions, stayed in the lower currents, reached England ahead of all others, landed farther north than any of his opponents, and carried off the aeronautic championship.

After this demonstration of the scientific knowledge of the Weather Bureau, who will be so unkind as to scoff because a mere fair and warmer prediction is followed by rain and cooler?